

*The Historical Trail*  
1980



An album of Methodist History, by Elmer T. Clark. Pierce and Smith, 1952. Page 89.

**ROBERT RAIKES,  
FOUNDER OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL, 1780**

**THE HISTORICAL TRAIL**  
**Yearbook of the Historical Society of the**  
**Southern New Jersey Annual Conference of The**  
**United Methodist Church**

**FOREWORD**

History is said to repeat itself; therefore, it is good to look into the past to receive a view of the present and future. Through the articles of this book, we can obtain insights that will make our present more meaningful. As an example, we may see ways to overcome the current decrease in our Sunday Schools by observing the zeal of the early founders of the Sunday School as revealed in the article "The Origin of the Sunday Schools in England and America" by Miriam L. Coffee. Also, the inspiration of special days in the Church School calendar of the past has had a decided influence upon the youth. Penny Moore in her article "Memories of Children's Day" suggests that perhaps a revival of some of these days such as Children's Day might revitalize our Sunday School.

Two articles, "Charter Members of the New Jersey Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church," by Robert B. Steelman and "Social Thought in the New Jersey Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1929-1941" by Robert J. Williams, give us insights about the type of men in our conference and the work they did for our conference.

The Class Meetings of a few years ago and the small groups of today call to our minds the importance of a spiritual group within each church. "A Brief Account of the Holy Club at Oxford on the 251st Anniversary of Its Founding" by William J. Kingston, Jr. reveals to us why the birth of our church has given such spiritual life to the Christian way of life.

As you read these articles, relive the past that the present and future of our church might be worth recounting.

**DR. J. HILLMAN COFFEE**  
*President - Editor*

## THE ORIGIN OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND AND IN AMERICA

by Miriam L. Coffee

The religious awakening of the middle eighteenth century helped in the establishment and the growth of the Sunday Schools. The awakening had distinctive features: was characteristically Protestant, stressed the authority of the Scriptures, stressed salvation by faith alone and the priesthood of all believers, made much of a personal religious experience, and endeavored to "preach the Gospel to every creature." The awakening gave rise to efforts to relieve suffering and to correct collective evils. The purpose of the Sunday Schools met these ideas of the eighteenth century, religious awakening that had repercussions which touched life at many angles. In this period, a few persons cared enough about the illiterate children to start a Sunday School for their improvement.

Robert Raikes (1735-1811) of Gloucester, England, is generally credited with the creation of Sunday Schools; however, Miss Hannah Ball (1733-1792) in 1769, eleven years before Mr. Raikes' first Sunday School, gathered a number of poor and neglected children in her home and taught them Saturday and Sunday. She made reports of her progress to John Wesley who encouraged her efforts.

In 1780 (some authorities say 1781), Robert Raikes, a benevolent and wealthy, Christian newspaper man, asked, "What shall be done for the neglected, street children of Gloucester?" A young lady, Miss Cook, to whom Raikes was talking, replied, "Let us teach them to read and take them to church." A young woman who later became the wife of Samuel Bradburn, one of Wesley's most distinguished preachers, assisted Raikes in his enterprise. Raikes secured four experienced teachers and personally paid them each a shilling a week. The Sunday classes should give a basic education as well as moral instruction. The Sunday charity schools were the only source of moral education or basic literacy that some children ever received.

In November, 1783, Raikes inserted in his Gloucester newspaper a long letter describing the Sunday School. This account was reprinted in *Gentlemen's Magazine* for June, 1784, and may be regarded as the beginning of the Sunday School movement. Raikes may not have established the first Sunday School, but through his newspaper he gave

the impetus to the Sunday School movement which eventually reached every continent.

Wesley was the first public man to approve of this new method of religious instruction and often visited various Sunday Schools. In 1784, he publicly recommended that his people adopt the Sunday School idea. In his *Journal* for April 19 and 20, 1788, Wesley describes the beautiful, treble singing of a hundred Sunday School boys and girls in Bolton, England: "I defy any to exceed it, except the angels in our Father's house." He also remarked that none were "out of tune."



The half-timbered house of Robert Raikes, at Southgate, Gloucester, England. His name and description about the Sunday School are inscribed on a plaque seen in the middle of the structure. The building is now a pub, "The Dirty Duck."

In Raikes' first Sunday School, the children were taught on Sunday because most of them worked the other six days. Later, Saturday was also used for those who worked only five days. The children attended from ten o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock. They went home for an hour and returned at one o'clock. They studied for a time; then they attended church. After church, they studied their catechism until five thirty. They were then sent home with the injunction not to make any noise nor to play in the streets.

The curriculum of the early schools sounds like our current public schools. Since the Sunday School was started for street children and children from homes of poverty, these children had no schooling. Since reading is necessary to study the Bible, reading as well as writing, math, and singing was taught. The teaching of writing was controversial. Some of the "better class" thought teaching the poor children to write would undermine the culture because this skill would give the children a social mobility destructive to all society. In addition to these subjects, the catechism was taught along with decent behavior: refraining from swearing, and eliminating calling names. In case of quarrels or fights, the aggressor was compelled to ask pardon; and the offended party was encouraged to forgive.

The only entrance requirements Raikes made were clean faces, clean hands, and combed hair. Inspection was performed each class period. Raikes soon discovered that most of the children had a desire for learning. He encouraged this desire by presenting little rewards of books, combs, shoes, or some other article of clothing to the students who did the best work or accomplished a required amount of work.

The effects of the Sunday Schools were noticeable. Many children were taken off the streets; consequently, crime and community problems decreased. Employers were enthusiastic about the change at work in the attitudes and the behavior of the Sunday School students. A manufacturer of hemp and flax stated, "The change could not have been more extraordinary had they (the children) been changed from wolves and tigers to men. . . They have become more tractable and obedient, and less quarrelsome and revengeful." The change in the children also brought beneficial results to the home and to the attitudes of the parents.

In the Bolton Sunday School, which was watched closely by John Wesley, there was an enrollment of a thousand children. They met at three o'clock on Sunday for a period of study. Afterwards, small groups of the boys and the girls, around eight or ten in a group, would visit the sick and the unchurched. The youth would exhort, comfort, pray, and sing as the occasion demanded.

Throughout the history of the British Sunday School, concern for the children's welfare, especially neglected-children, was of first importance. Two of the most important emphases were knowledge of the Bible leading to a decision for Christ and a concern for others. So that the teachers would be adequate to meet these goals, they needed a Christian

experience of their own and a knowledge of the Bible. To insure the latter, many teachers were instructed in Hebrew and Greek along with Bible study.

Because of the attendance increase of the Sunday Schools and for better instruction, the schools were divided into four groups: 1-infants: up to seven years of age; 2-ignorant: seven years of age and older, unable to read; 3-instructed: seven to fifteen years of age, could read; 4-adults: fifteen years of age and over.

There have been four stages in the development of British Methodist Sunday Schools. These can not be distinguished by specific dates, but have tended to overlap, reflecting the degree of understanding and concern for the teaching and training of children felt within Methodism. In the beginning, there was a great concern for the children's welfare. One fruit of the evangelical revival was a new sense of responsibility for others, especially those neglected by society as a whole. If a Methodist Church building existed, a school was erected as near as possible so that the children could be taken to worship easily. These early schools were financed and maintained mainly by voluntary contributions. In contrast to other Sunday School workers, those in Methodism seldom received any payment. A second stage was the concern to teach. Teachers were encouraged by their students' eagerness to learn. This desire for knowledge brought the day school into existence with the Sunday session. Thirdly, there was a concern to teach the Bible. In time, there was no longer a need to teach secular subjects on Sunday. Biblical lesson courses were introduced and magazines started both for the help of teachers and the edification of children. Last, there was a concern for Christian discipleship. The Sunday School movement had as its aim to bring children into a personal knowledge of Christ as Savior. Methodism owes an incalculable debt to those early Sunday School workers.

In America, there were a few isolated Sunday Schools as early as the seventeenth century. As early as 1737, John Wesley started school on Sunday in Christ Church, Savannah, Georgia, and included children who were taught the catechism. Later, in 1785, William Elliott, a Methodist layman, instructed his own children and several young men "bound out" to him. He had instructions for his slaves at a different hour. Most of these early schools were limited to individual plantations.

In 1786, Bishop Asbury established the first Sunday School in the New World open to the public, not a plantation school, in Hanover

County, Virginia, at the house of Thomas Crenshaw. These first Sunday Schools were primarily for the benefit of the slaves in the South. The first convert of record was John Charleston, a native, Virginia Negro. Friends raised money to buy his freedom. He became an outstanding minister and missionary.

The Sunday School movement had a hard struggle getting under way in America. In Charleston, South Carolina, in 1787, a Methodist preacher George Daughaday was drenched with water from a public cistern "for the crime of conducting a Sunday School for the benefit of African children of that vicinity." In Connecticut, in 1820, a young girl who had started a Sunday School class was told that she was desecrating God's day and God's house and doing the Devil's work.

Like England, the schools were held on Sunday because the children worked the other six days. The students were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, Bible, and singing. In the early days, Wesley's "Instructions for Children" and his "Short Scriptural Catechism" were used for religious instruction. Quantities of memory work were required of the children who received awards for their accomplishment. After a time, some people thought teaching secular subjects on Sunday profaned the Sabbath. Also, public schools took over the secular studies. These two reasons caused a change in the Sunday School curriculum so that only religion was taught in the Sunday Schools.

In the early years, the Sunday School was divided into four grades: 1-those learning the alphabet and one syllable words; 2-those reading two and three syllable words, 3-those reading in Scripture, 4-those reading the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

The first efforts toward education in the A. M. E. Church were in the area of Sunday Schools. In 1795, Richard Allen organized the first all Negro Sunday School in America. This was a day and a night school. By 1819, the school closed; but in 1829, in Chillicothe, Ohio, the Negro school was revived and spread throughout America. The Negro Sunday School often led to the establishment of schools of higher learning for the blacks.

In 1814, Philadelphia had its first Sunday School open to everyone. The only furniture was two benches. Finally, a table and two chairs were given the group who thought their room well-equipped. Finally, the group was pushed out of the church because the space was needed. For quite some time, the Sunday School pupils could meet only in nice weather as they had to meet outdoors.

In the early days as the frontier moved farther west, early missionaries traveled on foot from village to village, gave tracts, and started Sunday Schools. Horses were unwelcome in the villages because they ate too much. These missionaries were paid one dollar a day. In these pioneer communities, the Sunday School became a great help; and many eventually developed into churches. In these sparsely settled communities, the American Sunday School movement became interdenominational in character and sponsored union schools since denominational groups could not operate separately.

Over the years, many Sunday School related organizations have been formed, accomplished their purposes, and disappeared. On January 11, 1791, the first Interdenominational Sunday School Association was organized in Philadelphia. This association helped to bring unity and universal standards into the Sunday School movement. The General Conference of 1866 made Sunday Schools an integral part of the church. This action removed the Sunday School from the jurisdiction of the Sunday School Association. By 1884, most of the conferences had endorsed the Sunday School agency; and at the conference of that year, it received recognition as an official department. In 1832, the first National Sunday School Convention was organized in New York City. There were two hundred and twenty delegates present, representing fourteen of twenty-four states and four territories. W. H. Coleman organized and conducted the first leadership training enterprise, known as the Sunday School Institute. This arose out of the need to prepare teachers to use the then new Uniform Lesson system, which practically all of the Methodist Churches had adopted. The National Primary Union, formed in 1884, provided a rallying point for the opposition to the International Uniform Lesson plan.

One of the strongest influences on the Sunday School was the American Sunday School Union, formed in Philadelphia in 1824 and organized in 1827 to help Sunday Schools spread west with the nation and to meet the challenge of "infidels, Catholics, and the universal degeneracy of manners that was believed to be fostered by Andrew Jackson's presidency." At first, Sunday School growth in America was slow. Interdenominational efforts were widespread through the American Sunday School Union. In 1827, the Sunday School of the M. E. Church was launched and the American Sunday School Union gave impetus to the work. Since the catechism and the Bible were the teaching tools, large use was made of Sunday School libraries. Many

books were printed for them. In 1830, the American Sunday School Union had its imprint on two hundred volumes. Publications have always been a great project with the Sunday School. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries might be characterized as the years of the Sunday School publications. They were and are recognized as some of the best in the world. In this country, the Sunday School Union and the spread of the Sunday School movement seem to have been even wider and more thorough than in any other part of the world. In 1875 in America, there were 1,600,000 teachers and 13,500,000 pupils against 1,000,000 teachers and 12,000,000 pupils in all other parts of the world. The Union emphasized the Bible as the teaching tool and said that the "Bible is the sun that is the most enlightening, enlivening, purifying, pervasive, and powerful force known." The Union realized its three-fold purpose: the publication of suitable literature for Sunday Schools; the selection of Biblical lessons and helps; and the organization of Sunday Schools in needy parts of the country. The American Sunday School Union eventually became split on the slavery and the temperance issues.

Curriculum has always been a controversial issue in American Sunday Schools. The earlier Sunday Schools, of course, had also taught the "3 R's;" but as public education became more general, the schools in the churches concentrated upon the Bible. By 1825, most of the secular subjects were dropped from the Sunday School curriculum. During the fifty years from 1850 to 1900, the Sunday Schools throughout the United States began using uniform lesson materials. Until the last five decades of the 1800's, the Sunday School had for the most part been devoted to Bible study with no particular continuity nor unity.

In 1872, the Uniform International Lessons were adopted and the first lesson committee was appointed to select the lessons for seven years. The Uniform Lessons divided the Bible into cycles of passages for study. This was a significant feat of organization; however, the youngest children and the oldest adults studied the same lessons with the same Biblical commentaries.

From 1868 to 1888, John Heyl Vincent was the Sunday School editor. With his Chautauqua movement, Vincent put the Sunday School in the "big time." Lacking college training, Vincent began a training school for Sunday School teachers in his own churches. This activity became the first widespread institution of adult self-education in America. Vincent inaugurated the Palestine Class in many of his

churches. These classes studied the Biblical geography. Ulysses S. Grant became interested in the classes and became a friend of Vincent. Grant's appearance at Chautauqua was a great drawing card. The meetings at Chautauqua Lake were primarily for teacher training. Thousands of all denominations flocked to Chautauqua while other thousands remained at home reading the publications and books prescribed by the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. The need for this teacher training began because of the Uniform Lessons and, later, the graded lessons.

Another influential development for the Sunday School was the introduction of Graded Lessons. Josephine L. Baldwin (1859-1931), born of missionary parents in China, had much influence in having graded lessons in the Sunday School. At the age of three, Josephine and her mother were returning to America when the mother became ill and died en route, Josephine became a daughter of the Newark Conference. She was very intelligent and became valedictorian at college graduation. She was always interested in helping children. She was in charge of the elementary Sunday School in Newark for twenty-four years. She pioneered in the development and promotion of the graded lessons. As usual there were some who did not like the graded lessons. People said the lessons were not completely Biblical because some lessons were about early, Christian leaders like Wesley. Having graded lessons with subjects suitable to various age levels and commentaries suitable to a particular age was finally adopted with the understanding that the Uniform Lessons should continue. After a twenty year struggle, the International Sunday School Association, in 1908, agreed to issue a series of graded lessons in addition to the uniform lessons. The continued use of both types of lessons demonstrated that each was suited to meet the needs of churches of different backgrounds and teacher competence.

Methods of teaching have changed over the years. One of the most important was the development of visual teaching methods which improved the learning. The innovation of the blackboard was a great help. One teacher had a fifteen foot blackboard which took six days to fill. After her lesson on Sunday, practically all nine hundred students could recount the lesson. Other teachers used objects such as loaves of bread to get across the lesson. Visualization, however, had some problems. One teacher was rather taken aback when she visited Boston with her loaf of bread and asked the children what they had for breakfast. Expecting the answer of toast or bread, she was stunned when the children shouted, "Baked beans." There went her object lesson!

Sunday School teachers, for the most part, should be awarded a special star in their heavenly crowns. An early nineteenth century description of a Sunday School teacher's assets is that "Teachers must not be haughty nor distant, but condescending, and to a proper extent familiar—not irritable nor impatient, but kind and forbearing—not gloomy nor melancholy, but cheerful and pleasant—not partial nor resentful, but administering favors with equal hand, bearing with and forgiving the follies of youth."

Sunday School teachers have been criticized and unappreciated; yet, with no pay, they have brought education to the destitute and the ignorant, have helped guide the religious development of children and youth for two hundred years, and have helped adults broaden their knowledge and understanding of the Bible and Christianity. In a large measure, the Sunday School has kept the church vigorous.

One significant feature of the Sunday School is that it is essentially a lay movement. Another feature is that the Sunday School began in order to help the poor and neglected children of all races. Another factor is that the children were taught with the purpose of making a personal decision for Christ, and records were kept stating the number of conversions each year. These young people were then added to the church rolls.

What shall be done with the poor, the unwanted, the unchurched?  
Teach them and take them to church.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bucke, Emory Stevens, ed., *The History of American Methodism*, Vols. I, II, III, World Wide Sunday School Work, Abingdon Press.
- Harlshorn, W. H., ed., *The World's Sunday School Association*, Chicago, Illinois, 1910.
- Harmon, Nolan B., ed., *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, Vols. I, II, Nashville, United Methodist Publishing House, 1974c.
- Hyde, A. B., *The Story of Methodism*, Greenfield, Massachusetts, Willey and Johns Publishers, 1887.
- Methodist Bicentennial Historical Papers, *Forever Beginning, 1766-1966*, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, Association of Methodist Historical Society.
- Tees, Francis H., *The Beginning of Methodism in England and America*, Nashville, Tennessee, The Parthenon Press.
- Wesley, John, *The Arminian Magazine for the Year 1785*, London, J. Paramore, Publisher.
- Wesley, John, *Wesley's Journal*, Vol. III, April 19, 20, 1788.



## MEMORIES OF CHILDREN'S DAY

by Penny Moore

Children's Day in the Methodist Churches has been an exciting event in the church calendar. How did it start, and why is it just a memory of the past? I was thinking about Children's Day recently when I happened to read the Conference Minutes of 1896, pp. 40, 41 that stated "Merchantville Church was dedicated May 5, 1895. The Church stands on the site of the one in which the first Children's Day service was held, and in the afternoon of the day of dedication, a beautiful memorial window commemorating that event was unveiled by Rev. Robert S. Harris, who, when pastor of the church in 1866, originated this important service."

It was shortly after the completion and dedication of the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, Merchantville, that the pastor, Rev. Robert S. Harris, thought it might be nice to have a Children's Day complete with recitations, flowers, music, addresses, and a special collection of money for some benevolent purposes. This idea soon caught fire, and the second Sunday in June was established as Children's Day in the Methodist Churches. The Conference Minutes of 1892, pp. 72, 73 states that "The Sunday School turned out in force, with D. S. Stetson, Superintendent, leading each scholar bringing a variety of flowers. Rev. J. B. Dobbins, Presiding Elder; Joseph A. Thornley, of Philadelphia; and Hon. A. G. Cattell, made addresses."

What was my Children's Day like? I recall the services so vividly. Mother was the pianist for the Beginner's Department. For months, we practiced the songs and verses we would sing and recite on this very special day. Excitement grew with each week's rehearsal. Notices were sent home with the children. Parents were invited to come and to share any fresh flowers from their gardens. Daisies were gathered from nearby fields. Great preparation went into flower arranging on the platform which was extended from the pulpit area and the altar moved away. Small chairs were carried upstairs so all the little ones could be seated there in the church sanctuary.

Each child was expected to wear white clothing for this service. Department stores did a brisk business as parents rushed their children to the stores for white suits or white dresses, socks, shoes, and big hairribbons tied in a huge bow across the top of each girl's head.

Children were scrubbed, dressed in this new finery, and admonished not to lift their dresses, and to sit or stand still. It was not uncommon for nervous little girls to twist the hem of their skirts and mortify their parents by exposing their ruffled petticoats. Some became frightened and cried. I was always petrified. Luckily, my sister, who is eighteen months older than I, learned my lines as well as her own when mother drilled us; therefore, when I forgot my lines, she prompted me and sometimes said the whole verse herself. What a happy day it was for all of us! Grandparents would come, and everyone was so happy.

Like so many good things, Children's Day has become outmoded. No longer are children expected to recite verses about nature and God and their love of Jesus. No longer is there a public outpouring of family pride and a day of family sharing. While Family Sunday took on a new, more inclusive dimension, it has never quite engendered the special significance of the children's place in the important scheme of church functions and in the home ties with the church that came about through the Children's Day Service. There is nothing that pulls at the heart strings quite so much as a little child singing praise to God and telling the world that "Jesus Loves Me This I Know for the Bible Tells Me So." To be sure, many churches have children's choirs that sing faithfully and are a blessing to the service of worship. Still, the excitement of that special day is gone. I often wonder if Children's Day will ever be revived again.

## CHARTER MEMBERS OF THE NEW JERSEY CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

by Robert B. Steelman

The first geographically defined Annual Conferences in American Methodism were formed by the 1796 General Conference. They were New England, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Virginia, South Carolina and Western.<sup>1</sup> All of New Jersey was included in the Philadelphia Conference until the New Jersey Conference was established in 1836. The only defection in the ranks of New Jersey Methodism occurred in 1828 when the "Reformers," as they were called, withdrew to form what soon became the Methodist Protestant Church. From the very beginning this included some Circuits and a few ministers previously associated with the parent body in New Jersey.<sup>2</sup>

New Jersey Methodism continued to grow until it came of age in 1836. At the General Conference meeting in Cincinnati that year, official action was taken to create the New Jersey Conference. "The New Jersey Conference shall include the whole state of New Jersey, Staten Island, and so much of the states of New York and Pennsylvania as is now included in the Asbury District."<sup>3</sup>

Since that time the Newark (now Northern New Jersey) Conference was formed in 1827. The New Jersey Conference continued with boundaries virtually identical to the Southern New Jersey Conference today. The merger of Methodism in 1939 brought into our Conference those former churches and ministers of the Eastern Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church as were located within the bounds of the New Jersey Conference, and we became the New Jersey Conference of The Methodist Church. In 1965, the churches and ministers of the former Delaware Conference of the Central Jurisdiction as were located within our Conference became part of the New Jersey Conference. July 1, 1965, the Conference became the Southern New Jersey Conference.<sup>4</sup> With the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church in 1968 to become the United Methodist Church, the Conference became the Southern New Jersey Conference of the United Methodist Church. Those churches and ministers of the former

<sup>1</sup>*Doctrines and Disciplines of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America*, 10th Edition, Philadelphia, 1798, 32, 3.

<sup>2</sup>See manuscript Sources in Drew University including the Pa. and N.J. Conference M P Minute Book, 1829-1843.

<sup>3</sup>*Journal of the General Conference*, 1836, 432.

<sup>4</sup>*Minutes of the SNC Conference*, 1965, 282.

Evangelical United Brethren Church located in southern New Jersey became a part of the Conference.

With this brief background it is of significance to note who those ministers were that constituted the New Jersey Conference in 1836. It must be remembered that only ministers in full connection were voting members of the Annual Conference. Who were these Charter Members of the New Jersey Conference?

The Conference was created by action of the 1836 General Conference. However, the first Conference session was not held until April 26, 1837, under the Episcopal leadership of Bishop Beverly Waugh. Conference met in Halsey Street Church, Newark. There are no printed minutes of that first Conference, but we do have in the Conference Archives the handwritten minutes of that session. It contains the list of 70 ministerial members. Two of them, George Banghart and John N. Crane, had just transferred from the Philadelphia Conference. Five others served in New Jersey in 1836, but transferred to other Conferences prior to the 1837 Conference session. These five were Samuel Grace, Thomas Jefferson Thompson, J. Leonard Gilder, John B. Hagany and Levi Scott. Levi Scott, native of Delaware, later was elected a bishop of the Church. He served Franklin Street Church, Newark, in 1836.

The list of charter members includes men not only prominent in New Jersey Methodism but throughout the Church. Heading the list is Thomas Ware, already a 50 year veteran. Native of Greenwich, N.J., his family is noted for the famous Ware Chairs, prized antique heirlooms of many South Jersey families. Thomas was a Revolutionary War soldier who was converted under Methodist preaching in Mount Holly. As a young preacher he attended the 1784 Christmas Conference which organized the Methodist Episcopal Church. In his early ministry he served in the mountainous Holston region of southwestern Virginia and northeastern Tennessee, then a real frontier area. Later he was a Presiding Elder and from 1812-1816, Book Editor of the Church.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Morrell, second on the list of charter members, entered the full connection in 1788. Another Revolutionary War soldier, he was Captain, then Major of the 4th New Jersey Brigade. Major Morrell became an intimate friend and correspondent of Bishop Asbury. He also knew well President George Washington. It was Morrell who arranged an audience with Washington for Bishop Asbury and Coke to present the congratulations and prayers of the Methodists to the first president of our country. Morrell's home was in Elizabeth, N.J., and

<sup>6</sup>See his autobiography, *Sketches of the Life and Travels of Rev. Thomas Ware*, New York: Mason & Lane, 1839.

he continued to serve the Church long after his active itinerant days were at an end.

James Campbell, Daniel Fidler, David Bartine, James Moore, and Peter Vannest were the other charter members who entered the ministry before 1800. They were among the fathers of the faith. For 41 years David Bartine travelled the circuits of Methodism from northern Canada to the Delmarva peninsula, though most of his ministry was on the Circuits of the Garden State.

Peter Vannest was another veteran of the cross. His labors for the Master took him to New England, upper New York State and Canada as well as to circuits in New Jersey. Twice he was a Presiding Elder, first on the Cayuga, New York District, then from 1811 to 1814 on the East Jersey District. The last 30 years of his life were lived as a useful retiree in Pemberton, N.J., until in his 92nd year he went to be with his Lord.<sup>6</sup>

The next name on our list is that of the venerable Henry Boehm, son of Martin Boehm, one of the founders of the United Brethren Church. Henry was one of Bishop Asbury's travel companions, and his fluency in the German language made him extremely useful among those settlers. His ministry thus took him across virtually the entire Church of his day, though he spent much time in New Jersey. In later years Staten Island was his home. He joined the Newark Conference when it was organized in 1857. Henry Boehm lived to celebrate his 100th birthday.<sup>7</sup>

While it is difficult to pass over any of these names, I must pause by that of William Smith. Not much is known about his life. His early ministry took him to northern New York and Canada, but chiefly he labored in New Jersey. He died in 1854 in Long Branch and is buried within sight of where I write these words in West Long Branch.

Thomas Neal was a noted preacher, revivalist, and early Conference leader. At the first session of the New Jersey Conference in 1837, he was appointed Presiding Elder of the Camden District. After serving four years he served another four on the Burlington District. He was a delegate to the General Conferences of 1824, 1828, 1832 and 1844.<sup>8</sup>

Richard W. Petherbridge cannot be overlooked. An effective minister, he served as Presiding Elder on the West Jersey, Trenton and Burlington Districts. He was Financial agent for Pennington Seminary and several times a delegate to General Conference.

<sup>6</sup>He wrote numerous articles of his early ministry for the "Christian Advocate."

<sup>7</sup>See the *Reminiscences of Rev. Henry Boehm*, New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1875.

<sup>8</sup>New Jersey Conference Memorial, Philadelphia: Perkinpine & Higgins, 1865, pp. 355-363.

Watters Burroughs was another preacher who appears often on the early New Jersey Circuits. At the 1837 Conference he was appointed the Paterson District Presiding Elder and later served the Rahway District. He transferred to the Newark Conference in 1857.

John Knox Shaw became a full member of the Philadelphia Conference in 1828. His 30 year ministry was distinguished in every way. He was a preacher, scholar, church builder, administrator, and a man of sterling character. He was twice a Presiding Elder and twice a delegate to General Conference, but John Knox Shaw is best known as the founder of Pennington School. While he was stationed at Pennington, the Conference decided to found a school. Shaw raised the most money, \$5000, by canvassing the State, and the school was built at Pennington.

Space does not permit the detailing of information about more of the distinguished members of the charter class of the Conference. Yet, there are names too significant to be passed by unnoticed. There is Joseph Chatte, buried beneath the shadow of the Church this writer serves. His son was a noted Monmouth County educator and temperance advocate. Jefferson Lewis, died 1895, was Conference Secretary for 14 years, Trustee of Pennington Seminary for 11 years, Presiding Elder for two terms and twice delegate to General Conference.

John L. Lenhart was a U.S. Navy Chaplain who lost his life at sea during the Civil War. William A. Wilmer was the first Secretary of the New Jersey Conference, serving for five years. He came from a distinguished family of Trenton Methodists, his father being one of the first trustees of First Church Trenton, and he distinguished himself in the ministry.

The Rev. Francis Asbury Morrell, son of Major Rev. Thomas Morrell, was himself a noted Conference leader. His mother is said to have been a member of Philip Embury's Class in New York City.

George A. Raybold was the first historian of New Jersey Methodism. The books he wrote and some of the material he collected are still vital sources of early New Jersey Methodism.<sup>9</sup> The Buckley brothers, James and John, were both charter members. James was the first New Jersey Conference member to be called home to God, dying in 1838 at the young age of 28. His brother followed him only four years later. They were natives of England.

<sup>9</sup>Raybold authored, *Fatal Feud, Paul Perryman, Annals of Methodism & Reminiscences of Methodism in West Jersey, Revival Scenes, Incidents of Itineracy.*

Realizing some important men have not been mentioned, the complete list of Charter Members is listed below.

**CHARTER MEMBERS  
NEW JERSEY CONFERENCE**

APRIL 26, 1837

Full Connection	Name	How Removed
1786	Thomas Ware	Died March 11, 1842
1788	Thomas Morrell	Died August 9, 1838
1790	James Campbell	Died December 31, 1840
1791	Daniel Fidler	Died August 27, 1842
1795	David Bartine	Died April 26, 1850
1796	James Moore	Died May 11, 1842
1799	Peter Vannest	Died October 17, 1850
1803	Henry Boehm	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1804	John Walker	Died April 5, 1849
1804	William Smith	Died April 8, 1854
1809	Jacob Hevener	Withdrew 1849
1810	Thomas Neal	Died September 9, 1859
1812	William Williams	Trans. Phila. Conf. 1838
1813	Manning Force	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1814	George Banghart	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1816	William Lummis	Died Nov. 1, 1843
1816	Edward Stout	Died Nov. 3, 1859
1817	Richard W. Petherbridge	Died March 15, 1861
1818	Watters Burrows	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1819	Edward Page	Died March 25, 1867
1820	James Long	Died January 3, 1863
1823	Daniel Parish	Died April 1, 1848
1824	Isaac Winner	Died July 5, 1868
1826	Robert Lutton	Died December 5, 1858
1827	John K. Shaw	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1827	Anthony Atwood	Trans. Phila. Conf. 1839
1828	James N. Dandy	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1829	Sedgwick Rusling	Died March 7, 1876
1830	John Nicholson	Trans. Phila. Conf. 1838
1831	Thomas McCarroll	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1831	John S. Porter	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1831	Joseph Chatte	Died February 27, 1870

Full Connection	Name	How Removed
1831	George F. Brown	Died March 20, 1881
1831	Bromwell Andrew	Trans. Newark Conf. 1858
1831	Nathaniel Chew	Located 1850
1831	James Ayares	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1831	Abram Gearhart	Died March 28, 1855
1832	Jefferson Lewis	Died April 12, 1895
1832	Josiah F. Canfield	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1832	John L. Lenhart	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1832	Benjamin Benson	Died December 31, 1840
1832	William A. Wilmer	Died March 10, 1878
1832	Joseph Ashbrook	Died August 29, 1884
1832	Charles T. Ford	Died October 20, 1849
1832	Thomas G. Stewart	Died January 24, 1848
1833	Abram H. Street	Died August 15, 1898
1833	Francis A. Morrell	Died December 12, 1881
1833	William Baker	Died September 10, 1841
1833	Isaac N. Felch	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1833	John Buckley	Died June 28, 1842
1835	Jacob Loudenslager	Died October 2, 1871
1835	Peter D. Day	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1835	Benjamin Day	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1835	George A. Raybold	Died October 14, 1876
1835	Mulford Day	Died June 26, 1851
1835	John N. Crane	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1835	Robert E. Morrison	Died August 30, 1873
1836	Edward Saunders	Died December 31, 1859
1836	Curtis Talley	Died December 5, 1855
1836	James Buckley	Died March 15, 1838
1836	Washington Thomas	Expelled 1842
1836	Thomas Christopher	Died January 31, 1850
1836	Zerubabel Gaskill	Died November 13, 1852
1836	Mathias German	Died December 5, 1874
1836	George S. Wharton	Located 1842
1836	John S. Swaime	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1836	Oliver Badgley	Trans. Newark Conf. 1857
1836	John W. McDougal	Died February 16, 1882
1836	John Spear	Expelled 1842
1836	John F. Crouch	Died September 23, 1852

**SOCIAL THOUGHT IN THE NEW JERSEY CONFERENCE  
OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
1929-1941**

by Robert J. Williams

The decade of the depression was an important time in which the social message and consciousness of the Methodist Church matured and asserted itself. The period 1929-1941 witnessed the last years of prohibition and the eventual repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment; the great struggle for peace and international order which was shattered by World War II; the depression and growing awareness of the church's responsibility to the economic order and the laborer; the quest for improved race relations while racism was making itself felt with new and dramatic vigor; and a host of other concerns that would find their way into the resolutions and reports of the New Jersey Conference. This article is focused on the actions of the Annual Conference and not on the response or the agreement of individual churches with these pronouncements. The analysis of Conference action is feasible because of the availability of records contained in the *Year Book and Minutes* for the appropriate years. No pretense is made that these resolutions reflect majority opinion of the laity or even primary concerns of the majority of the clergy. The Conference each year passed resolutions concerning the social order, usually without any negative vote recorded, but this does not necessarily indicate that these concerns were a priority.

Both the opportunities and the limitations of Annual Conference resolutions are indicated by Walter G. Muelder. He wrote, "The conferences, meeting once a year, often get little beyond the resolutions stage. Between sessions there is seldom any agency to speak on new issues that arise. Frequently the resolutions are hastily drawn and insufficiently debated. Inadequate study of technical questions prevents the actions from being as useful in many concrete situations as is desirable."<sup>1</sup> One of the apparent weaknesses of social pronouncements in New Jersey is the amount of repetition from year to year. Evidently, new issues did not emerge fast enough to prevent the repeating of much from a previous year's report. Resolutions can also be analyzed according to how frequently they appear, and whether they are passive and moderate in tone. Resolutions can be aggressive, calling for specific action and challenging beliefs long cherished. Muelder enumerates helpful

guidelines in evaluating pronouncements, but the limitations of this article to achieve such evaluation should be acknowledged.

. . . it is important to note the context in which it was developed and the process of its adoption. In some circumstances a mild resolution may have tremendously powerful implications for church and society. Likewise one must note whether a resolution reflected a real consensus. . . or was put across by some special maneuver, or perhaps reflected the concern of only a few who cared, or even its passage reflected the indifference of those who knew they could evade implementing it.<sup>2</sup>

The relationship between the Methodist Church, as a denomination, and society has been adequately studied; but few annual conferences have been analyzed critically. In Methodism the Annual Conference is such an important link between the local church and the leadership and the program emphases of the denomination that this deficiency should be corrected. More appraisals of Annual Conference work are needed. "Some, like the New York East Conference, have been closely related to pioneer efforts in social Christianity. Others have illustrious but not so well-known records of creative initiative and effectiveness."<sup>3</sup> While the resolutions of the New Jersey Conference do not appear to be historic in their impact nor productive in changes in government or church policy, they are an important reflection of the sensitivity of New Jersey Methodists to the great issues of a difficult decade. While moderate in tone, except for temperance and prohibition statements, many are clearly progressive in attitude and intent.

On numerous occasions the Commission on Social Service would attempt to justify the need for the social application of Christianity and to encourage increased faithfulness to that application. In 1930, the report of the Commission on Social Service looked back to John Wesley: "John Wesley was a humanist of the right sort. His marvelous record of social service should thrill every one of us. His ministry to the needs of masses of people stimulated rather than hampered his evangelism. Methodism continues to minister to the needs of human folks."<sup>4</sup> In 1931, the Commission wrote:

The past year has offered many opportunities for the Church to demonstrate its purpose to apply the ministry and teaching of Christ to the needs of a troubled and confused world. The need of a Christian ministry that shall insist upon a free proclamation of Christian principles in all social living was never more apparent. . . Is there as much freedom in our ministry for the social conscience as there is for the theological mind? . . . Are our ministers fully conscious of their responsibilities as prophets of a Christian social and economic order, and are they using the privilege of a free pulpit to declare its principles?<sup>5</sup>

By 1940, the words of the Commission seem strong indeed:

Christian sentiment should crystallize more today on the great social issues. It is a sad commentary on the Christianity of any church if it has to wait on the progress of the general sentiment before it can preach finer ideals of human conduct.<sup>6</sup>

While there may have been a growing sensitivity on the part of some to such concerns, it is evident that many still needed to be convinced. An Annual Conference may not reflect the same consciousness that was evident at General Conference for years. The adoption of the Social Creed in 1908 and the Methodist Federation for Social Service were vanguard actions that would be criticized by many who did not perceive the same relationship between the gospel and society.

One of the most difficult problems to solve is the breadth of the sentiment embodied in the resolutions and reports presented to the Conference. One approach that may yield insight is to investigate the composition of the Commission on Social Service. A careful study was made of the Commission and the Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals for the years 1929-1936. I checked the dates that thirty of the members of the 1936 Commission entered the Conference. Ten out of the thirty had been in ten years or less. Twenty-two of thirty had been in twenty years or less. In reviewing these years of service and the names of some placed on the Commission, I feel that it was a common practice to place younger ministers on the Commission. Having done the same checking on the smaller 1929 Commission, I found approximately the same proportion by age. Only a few cases were names of men discovered that had served large churches and had other significant responsibilities in the Conference, e.g., Harold Paul Sloan, Austin C. Brady, E. A. Wells, W. W. Payne and B. H. Decker. Many members would gain prominence as they gained seniority such as B. F. Allgood, Herbert J. Smith, W. R. Guffick, P.A. Frederick, and E. W. Palmer. Since the Secretary of the Commission served with the Bureau of Architecture in New York, he was not a resident pastor. Over three years sixty-four men served on the Commission, some for only a year or two.

Another indication of interest can be gained from the encouragement given to pastors to join the Methodist Federation on Social Service. In 1929, '31, '32 statements were made encouraging membership. In 1930, the report bemoans the fact that the New Jersey Conference had only two members of the Federation in 1928 while other conferences had as high as 78 members.<sup>7</sup> It was also adopted at the 1930 Conference that

R. A. Conover and E. M. Conover, chairman and secretary respectively of the Commission on Social Service, would be authorized to be the Conference delegates to the third Evanston Conference of the Federation, June 17-19, 1930, without expense to the Conference. This fact should clearly indicate the unwillingness of the Conference to place a high priority on such activity. In the later years of the decade, the Federation is seldom mentioned.

If the membership subscriptions to the New York *Christian Advocate* can be used as an indicator of social interest, one finds again little to substantiate any claim of a broad base of support for social causes. I believe it is justified to use subscription information because the *Advocate* had many articles of a social nature. I would think that those interested in the wider dimensions of the Christian community would have wanted to subscribe to it. However, on several occasions the Superintendents in their reports would express disappointment at the few subscriptions on their district. The concern appeared in several superintendents' reports; but in 1933, F. A. DeMaris wrote:

Our ministers are finding it difficult to keep the list of subscribers of *The Christian Advocate* up to where it was in other years. What a pity that this is true! . . . When truth is perverted both in editorial and news columns of the secular press, especially that pertaining to the great moral questions of the day, it behooves us to get the truth into the minds of the people.<sup>8</sup>

Another indication of the interest and activity of the local churches can be gained from the district superintendents' reports. Much space over the years was devoted to evangelism, church growth, debt reduction, improvements to the buildings, camp meetings, and district programs and activities. Mention would be made occasionally of the effects of the depression or the need for the social witness of the churches, but the disparity of emphasis on these issues was obvious.

Another question requiring further study is whether there was close linkage between the interest in temperance and prohibition and general social concern. It has been claimed that temperance and the "social gospel" were closely related in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Temperance leaders were also concerned about the social message of Christianity. "Yet the Prohibition movement had tended to become a socially autonomous cause."<sup>9</sup> Miller has claimed in *The History of American Methodism* that

*to support the fact that prohibition was an integral and legitimate element of the social gospel, it may be observed that those Methodists most sensitive to the sins of society—plutocracy, slums, corruption, exploitation of labor, lynching, war, and all the rest—were the very ones most outraged by the abuses of liquor.<sup>10</sup>*

However, a study of the members of the Commission on Social Service and the Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals may not bear out this latter claim but support instead that prohibition had become autonomous. There were only a few individuals to serve on both boards during 1929 to 1936. It must be noted that this does not preclude the possibility that men on each were not interested in the other cause, but some greater linkage should be expected. It should be noted that Harold Paul Sloan served on the General Commission on World Peace from 1929-1933 and on the General Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals 1936-1939. This, however, does not represent a significant link between these two concerns.

In the period 1929-1936, thirty-five individuals served on Temperance, sixty-four served on Social Service and three clergy served on the Anti-Saloon League. Only seven served on both Temperance and Social Service. Of the three Anti-Saloon clergy, one served on neither of the other boards; one served also on Temperance, and one served on both Temperance (1929-32) and Social Service (1935-36). With a total of ninety-nine appointments to the two boards, it could be expected that more than seven individuals would have served on both if the issues were closely related.

There seemed to be at work a process of separating general social interest from prohibition. In 1929 and 1930, the Social Service report included prohibition in its report. Starting in 1931, Temperance made its own report. Late in the decade, other concerns such as gambling and the breakdown of law and order were included in the Temperance report, but a separation of prohibition from general social consciousness seems reasonable. Temperance was concerned about individual, moral behavior and worked to legislate for that morality. The reports of Social Service reflected more a concern for the total society concentrating on peace, military training, economic order, and race.

While I have tried to make a case for the overall lack of interest in social issues and the uncertain relationship between temperance and the social gospel, one factor may indicate a growing interest in the Commission on Social Service. In 1934, the Board of Temperance was reduced in size from sixteen to eight members, while, in 1936, Social Service increased from twelve to thirty-six; and the district superintendents were added to its membership.

In spite of the apparent lack of impact on Conference resolutions on the local church or national events, what were the positions reflected in

the reports and the actions presented to the Conference sessions? The four major recurring themes over these years were prohibition and temperance; international order, including the problems of peace, disarmament, preparation for war; the economic order with concern for labor, the depression, and just forms of economic organization; and race relations. Other issues did appear from time to time.

The most consistent, vigorously militant concern was prohibition and temperance. Every year the Conference would receive a report either supporting prohibition or complaining about repeal. The change of tone of the reports after repeal in 1933 was noticeable. Prior to repeal, the reports indicated support for prohibition, the hope that it would continue, that the nation was better off because of it, and that the church must beat back all efforts at repeal. In 1932, the temperance report naively included:

We are convinced that "Prohibition will prevail because it is philosophically sound, legally enjoined, socially beneficial, economically profitable, and morally right." . . . We therefore renew our pledge of support to those valiant organizations which are heroically carrying on the fight to eradicate this evil. . .<sup>13</sup>

It would be only one year before churchmen knew that prohibition would not prevail. That same report was opposed to temperance without prohibition. The Protestant churches were aggressively asserting themselves, and nothing short of the eradication of the liquor trade would suffice. In 1932, Bishop Ernest G. Richardson, resident bishop of the Philadelphia Area, was elected president of the Anti-Saloon League of America. He was duly honored and applauded by the Conference for assuming such responsibility. In 1933, when repeal was imminent, the report enumerated the harmful effects of repeal and the need for increased effort to save the Eighteenth Amendment.

After repeal, in 1934, the report stated what the new methods of attack on liquor would be:

First, we pledge ourselves as Methodists, to practice absolute abstinence. . . We will not be temperate, we will. . . totally abstain. . . Second, we here declare our determination to devote time and thought and energy to a process of education. . . Third, we again attack, this time more militantly than before, the legalized liquor traffic, and dedicate ourselves to its final prohibition, its entire outlawry, its ultimate extinction.<sup>14</sup>

As the decade passed, the reports contained nothing new. The words were militant and the ideal remained the same. By 1937, the Temperance board was also condemning gambling and the breakdown of law; and by 1938, the board was condemning the cocktail hour and

warning of the danger of drinking for pregnant women. The 1937 Conference also passed a resolution requesting a temperance rally for the Conference during the following year on Sunday evening, but it did not occur. By 1941, the Board of Temperance could only rehearse again the events leading up to prohibition and repeat with an exhortation to fight on.

To our denomination temperance means opposition to alcoholic beverages. . . To some it would seem that the cause of temperance in the past decade has suffered a near death blow from which its very existence seems doomed. . . (During prohibition) unfortunately the forces for good, feeling that their prayers had been answered, laid away their sword and armor and ceased fighting. . . It should be the purpose of every Christian to take up the fight anew. Start in our own community in a small way, winning support by prayer, example and action. Temperance has not failed. Rather, we who are fighting failed to hold the line.<sup>15</sup>

No other cause would elicit such determination and zeal.

The international community and accompanying problems received much attention from the Commission on Social Service. The decade was begun amid the high hopes of the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the London Disarmament Conference but ended with war in Europe and the entrance of the United States to that war a growing possibility. The desire for peace was a recurring theme as one would expect. There were few surprises in the resolutions; for even as World War II was approaching, the desire was for reconciliation and understanding between peoples and nations. Most of the resolutions were general and not offensive. However, a few of the statements may prove unexpected in their content.

Many of the resolutions reflected or even repeated General Conference positions. In 1929, the Conference indicated its support of the Kellogg Anti-War Pact, its opposition to the construction of new cruisers and militarism in public education. It also telegrammed President Hoover congratulations upon his inauguration and commended his emphasis upon world peace and law enforcement.<sup>14</sup> In 1930 and '31, the report encouraged the elimination of all military training in state secondary schools and all compulsory training in colleges. There were prayers and praise for the London Conference and desire for the United States to join the World Court. Unfortunately, the Conference would accept in 1930 as part of the report:

We have confidence in the peaceful intention of the Japanese people and their leaders. This has been exemplified by their several evidences of friendliness.<sup>15</sup>

Hindsight is amusing and tragic. Part of the 1930 report was to have

been read in all the local churches, and each church was to vote on it and write leaders in government. In 1935, the concern for world peace was expressed, but the most interesting and fruitless resolution was the one requesting that the United States withdraw from the Olympics being held in Berlin in 1936

1. Because of the National Socialist Government's frank and unsportmanlike discrimination against Negro, Jewish, Christian, and other non-Nazi athletes;
2. Because of the persecution in present-day Germany of Jews and practicing Christians—Protestant and Catholic; and,
3. Because of the open admission of Chancellor Hitler himself that the holding of the Olympics in Germany will strengthen the power of the National Socialist Government, and thus prolong these intolerable persecutions.<sup>16</sup>

This resolution was presented by two superintendents, Brock and Sloan, and the Conference Secretary, Wells. Later in the decade resolutions repeated General Conference statements (1936), opposed an aggressive war for the United States on foreign soil (1937), offered prayers for peace and concern for the policies of Hitler (1938). By 1940, the concern was for support of our British comrades without having to go to war. A resolution stated that "the people of the United States feel for them in their heroic devotion and sacrifice; and we pledge to them our utmost support, short of war, in meeting this high and tragic responsibility."<sup>17</sup> The nationalistic language of World War I was not manifested in any report, and the Conference was encouraged

that preaching and prayer be truly Christian and not degenerate into a means of national propaganda, the brotherly relations be maintained among the Churches and Christians of all lands, the Church guard against becoming agencies for disseminating hatred for any nation or individual in that nation...<sup>18</sup>

The most radical and clear position was taken on the status of conscientious objectors. In 1931, it was recommended "that the General Conference in 1932 enact legislation to make it possible for students who are members of our Church to claim exemption from military training on conscientious grounds."<sup>19</sup> In 1940, it was resolved "that the minister and the lay member of the Annual Conference in any charge where Methodist youth... shall conscientiously object to any form of military training or service, shall give counsel and guidance to such youth in the procedures which shall ensue upon the formal registering of their objection with the proper authorities."<sup>20</sup> In 1941, a special offering was taken at Conference to provide for the expenses of the objectors who served at Civilian Public Service Camps. These expenses were \$35 per month for three Methodist youths working at these camps provided by the American Friends Service Committee.<sup>21</sup>

While the economic order, labor, and the depression received some notice, little of the reports were of great importance. The 1929 report accurately reflected on the hostility of the working men to the church. Because of the relationship of the church with industrial leaders, "great masses of working men look upon the church as unfavorable to their cause."<sup>22</sup> Concern was expressed in 1930 about unemployment and the suffering as part of the economic system, but such concern is hardly noteworthy. By 1931, the depression was being felt and the Conference approved a report which stated

For forty years remedies have been proposed for preventing unjust injunctions in connection with labor disputes. We commend the effort now being made in Congress to restrict the power of the Federal Courts to issue injunctions before both sides of every case are heard.<sup>23</sup>

While this is a mild resolution, it is one of the few that dealt with a specific question of economic life. By that year some of the superintendents were also indicating the effects of the depression on the local churches. The 1932 report contained some specific proposals:

1. A child-labor amendment to the Constitution
2. Unemployment insurance, old age pensions and sickness benefits
3. The withdrawal of national protection from private investments in foreign countries
4. The extension of constructive social control to all industries where monopolies dealing with the basic necessities of life obtain.
5. Increase of inheritance taxes and income taxes on a sliding scale...<sup>24</sup>

There were requests for the government to guarantee economic security (1933) and the indication that the economic order was un-Christian (1935). The most surprising statement may have occurred in 1938.

We recommend that the history, philosophy and variations of the cooperative movement be given continued and increased study. We recognize the now proven desirability of social ownership in such enterprises and properties as schools, parks, roads, city water and sewer systems and the postal service and suggest consideration of further extending social ownership.<sup>25</sup>

Resolutions encouraging study are usually non-offensive, but this seems to be support for a more socialistic understanding of society. Overall, the decade was packed by resolutions that reflected the economic turmoil of the society with calls for justice, security, and reform. New Deal legislation and the impending world crisis may have led the Commission to give less and less space to economic problems in its reports.

The 1930's did not mark unbridled progress for improving the condition of the Black. Depression hit both races; but when coupled with the

ravages of segregation, the Black particularly suffered. Lynchings seemed too prevalent, and miscarriages of justice were too frequent in the South. The decade would end with Methodism uniting with a jurisdictional system of government that would divide the denomination into five geographical jurisdictions and one central jurisdiction for black churches and members. The uniting church found a way to institutionalize racial tension which would not be overcome for thirty years. However, on the plus side, General Conference stated that the 1936 meeting would be held only in a city that did not discriminate against blacks in its accommodations. The Conference kept its promise and met in Columbus, Ohio. The actions of the New Jersey Conference reflected on these events.

In 1932 and '33, the Commission on Social Service reports condemned the outbreak of lynchings and requested that Lincoln Sunday become Race Relations Sunday. The 1935 Conference commended the General Church for planning to hold General Conference in a city that did not discriminate. The 1936 session reacted to the proposal of a Central Jurisdiction for black churches:

That the New Jersey Annual Conference... memorializes the first General Conference of United Methodism, if and when it shall have assembled, to detach from the Central Jurisdictional Conference, and united in the North Eastern Jurisdictional Conference, such of the Negro Conferences within the bounds of the North Eastern Jurisdictional Conference as may elect to be so transferred.<sup>26</sup>

The Conference also requested that "the various General Boards of the Methodist Episcopal Church... recognize the fact that we are an interracial church, and that they should employ on their staffs and office forces a proportionate number of Negroes."<sup>27</sup>

The Conference also heard a report of local conditions concerning discrimination.

Our sub-committee made a study of racial discrimination in New Jersey as practiced in hotels, restaurants, places of public amusement, industries and general economic life and in our educational system. Conditions are found which are contrary to our principles as Christians, to the laws and Constitution of the United States and contrary to enacted Statutes of the State of New Jersey.<sup>28</sup>

The Conference encouraged interracial meetings in local churches and efforts toward greater understanding (1937), condemned an incident in Cranbury where a black man was beaten in his home (1939), and opposed unfair hiring and employment practices aimed against blacks (1941).

Many issues received passing notice in the reports. Churches were encouraged to study the issue of capital punishment with an awareness of the uncertainty of its effectiveness (1929, '31, '32, and '33). However, in 1936, the report expressed opposition to capital punishment. "There is a growing conviction that whatever is wrong for the individual can never be right for society."<sup>29</sup>

The statement went on to list several objections to it as punishment.

There was great concern over maintaining traditional morality. The importance and place of the home was emphasized (1929, '30); Sunday as the Sabbath should remain holy; motion pictures were criticized for the portrayal of murder, adultery, seductions, etc. (1930, '31); indecent and obscene literature was condemned; gambling was opposed with particular concern for horse racing and dog tracks (1934); money should be invested according to Christian principles (1932); and civil rights and the freedom of the conscience were upheld (1930).

The story of any conference responding to and seeking to influence the course of society can be very exciting. Reading minutes and reports can not capture the intensity of feeling, the emotional exchanges, nor the apathy that may grip the delegate as he routinely voted approval, but the leaders who prepared the reports were faithful in their task. Positions taken were predictable, but New Jersey Methodists were aware of and involved with the great social forces at work in the decade of the depression.

#### ANNOTATIONS

1. Walter G. Muelder, *Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 260.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 396.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
4. *Minutes*, 1930, p. 265. (Hereafter, just year and page will be noted.)
5. 1931, p. 470.
6. 1940, p. 272.
7. 1930, p. 268.
8. 1933, p. 74.
9. Muelder, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
10. Robert Moats Miller, "Methodism and American Society, 1900-1939," *The History of American Methodism*, Vol. III, ed. by Emory Stevens Bucke, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 332.

11. 1932, p. 682.
12. 1934, p. 301.
13. 1941, p. 444.
14. 1929, pp. 72, 20.
15. 1930, p. 267.
16. 1935, p. 479.
17. 1940, p. 231.
18. 1941, p. 402.
19. 1931, p. 471.
20. 1940, p. 223.
21. 1941, p. 403.
22. 1929, p. 73.
23. 1931, p. 470.
24. 1932, p. 686.
25. 1938, p. 530.
26. 1936, p. 45.
27. 1936, p. 35.
28. 1936, p. 92.
29. 1936, p. 92.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1932, New York: The Methodist Book Concern, pp. 646-658.
- Miller, Robert Moats. "Methodism and American Society, 1900-1939," *The History of American Methodism*, Vol. III, ed. by Emory Stevens Bucke. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964, pp. 328-406.
- Muelder, Walter G. *Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961.
- New Jersey Conference Year Book and Minutes*, 1929-1941. (Referred to as *Minutes*)
- Norwood, Frederick A. *The Story of American Methodism*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974, pp. 391-405.

## A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE HOLY CLUB AT OXFORD ON THE 251ST ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDING

by William J. Kingston, Jr.

The Holy Club at Oxford University came into being through the efforts of a small group of serious young men who were endeavoring to keep their own balance and to lead a systematically Christian life in the midst of a profligate university community. They originally agreed to meet regularly in the evenings for the study of the Scriptures and for mutual encouragement.

Charles Wesley was the convenor. In 1729 he was twenty-one years old, had received his Bachelor of Arts degree, and was a tutor at Christ Church College, Oxford.

In November, 1729, John Wesley returned to the University after having served for some months following his ordination in the Church at Wroote, part of His father's parish. He became a teaching Fellow of Lincoln College. John was immediately invited to join and lead the group. He had been influenced during his later undergraduate years by the reading of Thomas A 'Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying* and William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. All three emphasized the need for systematic growth in the spiritual life and in serving God. Wesley drew up by-laws for the Club which would have done service for a monastic order. However, the main outlines which they adopted were meeting together three or four evenings a week for study of the Greek New Testament and self-examination; on Sunday evenings reading divinity (theology); receiving the Lord's Supper at least once a week; and fasting twice weekly on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

The original members of the Club were four: John Wesley; Charles Wesley; Robert Kirkham of Merton College, son of the rector of Stanton (near Oxford); and William Morgan, son of an Irish gentleman.

If John Wesley led them in spiritual development and austere practices, William Morgan introduced the outward-looking, practical expression of their faith. Already, he had been engaged in visiting and witnessing in the prisons twice weekly. It was he who began the practice of visiting and helping the sick and in beginning classes for basic instruction of the children of the poor.

All this systematic living and service drew upon the members of the Holy Club the mockery of their fellow students, and it was here that they were first labelled "Methodists."

The Holy Club changed members as men graduated and as others were drawn in from new classes. In 1730, several of John's students and one of Charles' joined them. In 1732, Ingham of Queens College, Broughton of Exeter College, Clayton of Brasenose College, and Hervey, (who later wrote "Teron and Aspasia") became part of the group.

Probably the most significant addition came in 1735 when George Whitefield, son of a widow who was keeping a tavern in Bristol, became a member. He was working his way through college by serving as a servant for his fellow collegians. For some time, he admired and wished to be a part of the Holy Club, and finally was drawn into fellowship.

He later wrote:

"They built me up daily in the knowledge and fear of God, and taught me to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"

The Holy Club had a far-reaching influence. It was not merely a snug spiritual nest for lonely Christians. It provided orderly living, study of the Scriptures, shared insights, opportunities for self-examination, and the inspiration that impelled these men from one of England's two great universities to dedicate their lives and their talents to the work of God throughout the English-speaking world.

The Wesleys went out first as missionaries to General Oglethorpe's colony in Georgia. They failed there primarily because they sought to impose the scholarly and austere systems of the Holy Club on the rugged pioneer community. When they returned to England in 1738, it was their associates of the Holy Club who sustained them through the time of spiritual crisis which resulted in their full assurance of personal salvation. It was from the orderliness of the Holy Club that the early order of Methodism grew. It was from the social service to the poor that the same concern became an integral part of the work of the Wesleys. It was from the self-examination of the Holy Club that the pattern for "class meetings" came. And it was from the members of the Holy Club that many of the first circuit riders in England came.

George Whitefield went forth also as a missionaries to America, but was more warmly received. Perhaps it was his eloquence. Perhaps, also, it was that hard, early years of his life had given him a more common touch. It was he who originally persuaded the Wesleys to adopt field

preaching when the doors of the churches were closed against them. In America, Whitefield, whose theology was somewhat more Calvinistic than the Wesleys, was to become a forerunner preparing the way for the later Methodist circuit riders as he united with William and Gilbert Tennant and others of the "New Side" Presbyterians in the warm revival which became the Great Awakening of the middle 1700's.

Great was the providence of God which made of this small group of seekers the source of so much of the evangelical religion which we know today in England, in America, and throughout the world.

**Historical Society of the  
Southern New Jersey Annual Conference of The  
United Methodist Church**

**HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS**

*Chairperson*  
*Vice Chairperson*  
*Secretary*  
*Financial Secretary*  
*Librarian*  
*Historian-Archivist*

Dr. J. Hillman Coffee  
Rev. James E. Thompson  
Mrs. Doreen Dyer  
Mrs. Edna Molyneaux  
Miss Emily Johnson  
Rev. Robert B. Steelman

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Considerable time and attention is being given to research for a new Conference History planned for the 150th Anniversary of our Conference in 1986. We anticipate that by next year's Conference Session plans will be presented to help us celebrate the Bicentennial of the organization of the Methodist Church in America in 1984 and to carry through to our 150th Anniversary in 1986.

Our Archival Collection continues to grow. In the past year we have added the records of Simpson Church, Long Branch, and Union Church, Burlington. Most recently we have obtained from Mrs. Anne Staats of Woodstown the complete records of the Bridgeton District Epworth League from 1891 until it became the M.Y.F. in the 1940's. We wish more people would turn over to the Archives records of Conference organizations and agencies that need to be preserved.

Because of the unfortunate fire at Pennington School, we are temporarily sharing part of our Historical Room with one of the school's deans. However, our records are all in order and available for research use at any time.

Research on the Union list of Conference ministers is completed. Soon this list will be part of a master file of all United Methodist Ministers being compiled for eventual publication by the United Methodist Publishing House. Over 1700 ministers have had an official relation to our Conference since 1836.

Publications available from the Society are the 1792 *Journal of the Rev. Richard Swain*, published by our Society in 1977. Copies can be ordered from our Financial Secretary at \$2.25 postpaid. Two other helpful resources available from Rev. Robert B. Steelman, 207 Locust Avenue, West Long Branch, N.J. 97764 are "Services and Resources for Worship on Historic Occasions" and "Guidelines for Local Church Historians and Records and History Committees." These are \$1.25 each postage paid.

You are invited to become a member of our Society. Dues are \$3.00 per person, or \$5.00 a couple. Benjamin Abbott Life Memberships for individuals or churches are available for \$50. Dues money should be sent to our Financial Secretary, Mrs. Edna Molyneaux, 768 East Garden Road, Vineland, N.J. 08360.

ROBERT B. STEELMAN  
*Historian-Archivist*